

COMMITTED TO
People's Right to Know

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XI No. 27

DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 02, 2001

www.dailystarnews.com

MAGH 27, 1407 BS

ZELKAD 14, 1421 HIJRI

16 PAGES PLUS MAGAZINE PRICE: TK. 9.00

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authority on Indian cuisine **Madhur
Jaffrey** face to face with **Almas
Zakiuddin**

Response to PM's offer Khaleda sticks to out- govt stand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the
Opposition in Parliament **Khaleda
Zia** has reiterated her demand for
immediate resignation of the gov-
ernment.

In response to Prime Minister
Sheikh Hasina's offer to hold elec-
tion on any date **Khaleda Zia** likes,
the opposition leader issued a
formal press statement late last
night where she further said that the
PM has no authority to announce
election date.

Khaleda said the PM's unneces-
sary repetition of the election date
issue is a strategy to mislead peo-
ple.

She said the caretaker govern-
ment to be installed after the resi-
gnation of AL government will finalise
the next step through discussion
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Abductors given ultimatum

Free hostages by Sunday morning or face massive military offensive, warns Kalparanjan

MORSHED ALI KHAN AND ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD from Rangamati

The authorities have given an ultimatum to the abductors of three foreign consultants to release the hostages by Sunday morning or face a massive military offensive.

The ultimatum was issued by Minister for CHT Affairs **Kalparanjan Chakma** at Bethchari army camp at a meeting at about 3:30 p.m.

The meeting, attended by about 350 tribal men and women of different villages in the remote Kalapahar area among others, was organised by the authorities to try to get local help to release the hostages.

"We are requesting you to release the hostages in two days time, otherwise the army will start a massive offensive on Sunday," **Kalparanjan** said to the audience in Chakma language.

"When the army launches the offensive, I will not take any responsibility for anything that may happen to your homes and lives," said the minister. The audience comprised village leaders, community members, officials of the British and Danish missions, foreign experts on hostage crisis and a host of military and other top officials. Leaflets containing pictures of the three hostages with an appeal in Bangla were distributed among the audience.

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Westerners urged to avoid CHT trip

Missions in Dhaka issue advisory

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

In view of the ongoing kidnap crisis, most western governments have advised their nationals to refrain from going to the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

One North American country and most of the European Union countries have sent out travel advisories to their citizens, discouraging them from taking trips to the hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban.

"Because of the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, we would

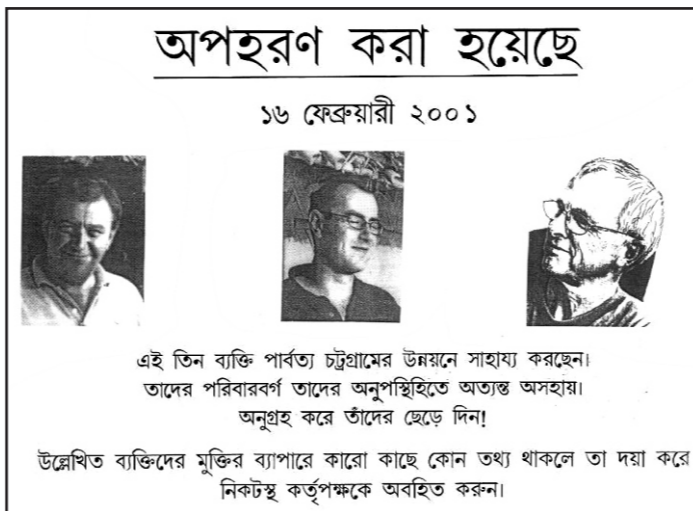
ask all American citizens to avoid unnecessary travel to the region at this time," said a US embassy official.

Most of the advisories issued by the foreign countries through their embassies or missions here have suggested that their citizens avoid going to the hill districts "unless it is absolutely necessary."

One European Union country has even advised its citizens in Bangladesh to make cautious movement anywhere in the country.

The envoy of that country, who

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Minister for CHT Affairs **Kalparanjan Chakma** (top) shows a leaflet to a meeting near the Bethchari army camp yesterday. The leaflet (bottom), which contains photographs of three European consultants, urges local people to help authorities free the hostages.

Ershad stays in jail

One-month detention under SPA

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Jailed former president and Jatiya Party Chairman **HM Ershad** was not released yesterday as he was detained for one month under the Special Powers Act (SPA).

On Wednesday, a fine of Tk 2.75 crore was deposited with the Bangladesh Bank for **Ershad's** release and the court ordered his release.

But the authorities of Dhaka Central Jail could not release **Ershad** because of the fresh detention order yesterday, sources concerned said.

Ershad's lawyer **Khudker Mahub Hossain** told this correspondent that they would file a writ petition with the High Court after collecting a copy of the detention order, possibly on Sunday.

Jail sources quoting **Ershad** as saying, "I knew something like this

would happen."

The sources said that the District Magistrate yesterday issued an order for one month's detention of **Ershad** under Article 3 (2) of the SPA, 1974. The article says that a person can be detained if a District Magistrate or Additional District Magistrate is convinced that he might get involved in harmful activities.

When asked why **Ershad** was detained, Law Minister **Abdul Matin Khasru** expressed his ignorance about it.

The Home Minister is now abroad.

Yesterday morning, **Ershad's** lawyers prayed in the First Additional Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, for 'recall of the production warrant' against **Ershad** in the General Monjur murder case, which

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JS session from Mar 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President **Shahabuddin Ahmed** yesterday summoned the Jatiya Sangsad to meet on March 29.

The first sitting of the session would begin at 10 am, a Presidential announcement said.

The last session was prorogued on January 31.

The ensuing session, 22nd of the seventh parliament, is likely to be a significant one on many counts, sources concerned said.

The opposition **BNP**, **Jatiya Party** (**Ershad**) and **Jamaat-e-Islami** are still rigid on their decision not to join parliament sessions, as in the case of the last eight sessions. They are demanding resignation of the Awami League government.

Parliament Secretariat sources said that the coming session would

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Dhaka-Agartala bus service later this year

BSS, Dhaka

Indian and Bangladesh have decided to start direct bus service between Agartala and Dhaka.

Officials of the two countries signed an agreement in Dhaka on Wednesday.

The bus service is likely to start in the second half of this year after the agreement is ratified by the two governments.

This will be the second direct bus connection between the two countries after Dhaka-Kolkata service was inaugurated in June 1999. Indian Prime Minister **Atal Behari Vajpayee** and former West Bengal Chief Minister **Jyoti Basu** were here for the purpose.

Navy frigate arrives end of May

STAR REPORT

The Bangladesh Navy would get delivery of the frigate by the end of May this year, as the construction of the craft is nearing completion at the Daewoo shipyard in Okpo, Korea.

The 11-member parliamentary delegation that visited the shipyard went aboard the warship now undergoing sea trial in Korea. The team is likely to return home today after its seven-day visit.

The authorities have paid 80 per cent of the total amount to the Daewoo Corporation to purchase the frigate worth about 105 million

US dollars.

Headed by Major General (Retd) **K M Saifullah**, the delegation comprising members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Defence and officials of the Bangladesh Navy went to Korea on February 23, following various allegations against the purchase.

During the visit, the team members including also opposition lawmakers called on the Korean Minister for National Defence on February 27. The minister assured the delegation of his government's all-out cooperation in smooth

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President **Shahabuddin Ahmed** (right) administers the oath of office of Chief Justice **Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury** (left) at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

New Chief Justice takes oath

UNB, Dhaka

President **Shahabuddin Ahmed** administered the oath of office to Justice **Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury** as Chief Justice at Bangabhaban yesterday morning.

Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina**, former chief justices, ministers, judges of the Supreme Court, MPs and senior lawyers attended the ceremony.

Cabinet Secretary **Qazi Shamsul Alam** conducted the oath taking ceremony.

Decapitated body recovered from manhole in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mutilated body of an unidentified man was recovered by police from North Goran in the city's Khilgaon area yesterday.

The body of the man, believed to be in his forties, was cut into 12 pieces and dumped into the manhole inside House 304, North Goran, Khilgaon in five shopping bags.

Officer-in-Charge of Khilgaon police said that an unidentified

person called up the police station at 10am yesterday and informed them about the matter. Police rushed to the house and recovered the mutilated body from the manhole.

The body was later sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Farid Ahmed, second officer of Khilgaon police said that it seemed the body was cut up by a butcher.

Anwara Begum, the landlady of

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Catalytic converter, DF filters must for motorised vehicles

UNB, Dhaka

The use of catalytic converter and diesel particulate filters has been made mandatory for all diesel and petrol-run vehicles for reducing air pollution.

The government has decided to make it compulsory from June this year after detailed discussion on the issue at an inter-ministerial meeting at the Environment and Forest Ministry yesterday.

Environment and Forest Minister **Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury** chaired the meeting.

The meeting also decided to ban use of hydraulic horn in vehicles and cancel registrations of the

vehicles using this.

The minister gave directives to all ministries, departments and organisations concerned to give their opinion within a week regarding the mandatory use of catalytic converter and DP filters.

The meeting also decided to take necessary steps towards making tax-free import of catalytic converter and DP filters, which stop emission of black smoke from vehicles and prevent air pollution.

Representatives from the ministries of Establishment, Environment, Commerce, Finance and Home Affairs, Energy and Mineral Resources Division, Roads and

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